1-1-2002

Direction of the Production: *David and Lisa*

Meredith Rachael Sylling
*Central Washington University*

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DAVID and LISA

by, James Reach

Meredith R. Sylling
Sunnyside High School
2001
Sunnyside High School
proudly presents . . .

DAVID & Lisa

By James Reach

November 9, 10, 16, 2001 7:00 PM
In the Sunnyside High School Auditorium

Students/Senior Citizens $3.00  Adults $5.00

Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.
David and Lisa is the poignant love story between two teenagers dealing with mental illness. Mature language and material – parental guidance suggested.
Characters

In order of their appearance

David Clemens .............................  Neil Garrison
Mrs. Clemens .............................  Mandy Stroh
Porter .................................  Casey Van de Graaf
Dr. Ellen Swinford ........................  Audrey Henry
Mrs. Ferris ...............................  Amiee Harvey
Manureen Hart ............................  Rachel Bott
Joseite .....................................  Kari Anne Martin
Biff ............................................ Pearce Fujinu
Sandra ........................................ Emma Ferro
Simon ......................................... Caleb Barr
Kate ............................................. Sara Higley
Lisa ............................................. Kayla Monroe
Barbara ....................................... Sienebe Coering
Robert ....................................... William Lint
Ben ............................................. Tyler Grubenhoff
John ............................................ Anthony Duncan
Mr. Clemens ................................ Ammon Wise
Girl ............................................. Delia Ramos
Woman ....................................... Janie Ramirez
First Hoodlum .............................. Jordan Visser
Second Hoodlum ............................ Jake Thomas
SOLUTIONS SERVICE

Congratulations Drama Club!

MISSION
To be recognized as the best designer and manufacturer of metal construction components, mainly in North America, through its flexibility, the quality of its products and its exceptional service.

2002 Morgan Road
Sunnyside, Washington, U.S.A., 98944
Telephone: (509) 837-7008 - Fax: (509) 839-0383
Internet: www.canammanac.com

Story of the Play
First a much-admired novel by the eminent psychiatrist, Theodore Isaac Rubin, then a screenplay by Eleanor Perry from which was made the award-winning motion picture, *David and Lisa* has now been adapted for the stage with the utmost modern stage techniques, the strange, appealing and utterly fascinating story of the two mentally-disturbed adolescent: David, only son of wealthy parents, over-protected by a dominating mother, who is tortured by his mania against being touched; and Lisa, the waif who has never known parental love, who has developed a split personality and is in effect two different girls, one of whom will speak only in childish rhymes and insists upon being spoken to in the same manner. The play follows them during the course of one term at Berekely School in 1958, where they have come under the sympathetic and understanding guidance of psychiatrist Ellen Swinford and her staff; follows them through exhilarating progress and depressing retrogression; follows them and their fellow students: Biff the street urchin; the over-romantic Kate; stout Sandra, unloved and unwanted by her glamorous father and step-mother; and others—with laughter and heartbreak and suspense, and with the continuous absorption of an authentic and well-told story about problems that are totally unfamiliar to most of us.

The action of the play takes place between the beginning and the end of one school term in 1958, in a home in Connecticut, and in and around a school in Westchester.
Get Psyched!

Love,
Your Family

Casey,

Congratulations to you and all the cast.
We are proud of you!

Love,
Dad, Mom, Alissa, and Emily

Anne M. Nealen, M.D.
Pediatrician
Birth to Twenty-one years
1614 E. Edison, Suite F
Sunnyside
(509) 837-7551

Caring for the People You Love
24 Hours a Day
Every Day
Level III Trauma Center
Sunnyside
COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Schoo
DIRECTION OF THE PRODUCTION

DAVID AND LISA

A Project Report
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
Theatre Production

by
Meredith Rachael Sylling
January, 2002
We hereby approve the project report of

Meredith Rachael Sylling

Candidate for the degree of Master of Arts

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

Date Professor Wesley Van Tassell, Committee Chair

Date Professor George Bellah

Date Professor Brenda Hubbard
ABSTRACT

THESIS PRODUCTION:

DAVID AND LISA

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Directed by

Meredith Rachael Sylling

November, 2001

This project entailed background research and documentation, casting, direction, and the post-production assessment of Sunnyside High School’s production of David and Lisa. Included in this thesis documentation are the three areas of research: preliminary information, pre-production analysis, and post-production evaluation.
Acknowledgements

The director would like to thank the following for their help on David and Lisa:

- Thesis Chair and Committee: Wesley Van Tassel, George Bellah, and Brenda Hubbard
- The Theatre Department at Central Washington University
- Parents of the actors and crew members
- Barb Miller and the A.S.B. office
- The Daily Sun News
- Tom Dolan
- Jim and Charlene Sleater
- Sara Schilperoort and the D.O. Copy Service
- The Visser family
- The Henry family
- Eric Sylling
- Lazer Quick
- Business and Patron sponsors
- The S.H.S. Custodial Staff
- The Administration and Faculty of Sunnyside High School
CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
Graduate Studies

Final Examination of
Meredith Rachael Sylling
B.A., Washington State University, 1996
for the degree of
Master of Arts
Theatre Production

Committee in Charge
Professor Wesley Van Tassel
Professor George Bellah  Professor Brenda Hubbard

McConnell Hall
Room 107
23 January, 2002
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Note: This form is to be completed as soon as the student has formed a committee and selected an option from the list below. The form should be submitted in quadruplicate to the Office of Graduate Studies in Barge 305.

Name: Meredith (Maia) Rachel Sylling
Address

Check option:  

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*Students taking written exam option may omit items 1-4 below.

1. Proposed Title: Direction of the production David and Lisa.

2. Purpose of Study: The direction of the production David and Lisa serves as the culminating experience in theatre graduate studies.

3. Scope of Study: Pre-production research, post-production evaluation, and the direction of the production (including the Director's Production Book and the documentation of the rehearsals) shall benefit both the student and the Theatre Arts Department.

4. Procedure to be used: Three phases of research will be included: 1. Pre-production research and thesis documentation: MLA style, 2. Rehearsal and direction of the production, 3. Post-production evaluation documentation.

Wesley Van Tassel  
Committee Chair  
Date: 1/19/01

George Bellah  
Department Chair or Designee  
Date: 1/19/01

Committee Member  
Brenda Hubbard  
Date: 1/19/01

R S Mack  
Dean of Graduate Studies  
Date: 1/19/01

Students will be required to submit two copies of all motion picture film, film strips, sound film strips, slides, tapes, cassettes, pictures, etc. produced as part of the thesis. These are to be submitted at the time the thesis (three copies) is submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research.

Please Note: Signatures have been redacted due to security concerns.
Performance Parameters

Sunnyside High School's production of David and Lisa will occur at 7:00 p.m. on the following dates: November 9, 10, and 16, 2001. There will also be a student matinee on November 8, 2001, at 9:00 a.m. The performances will occur in the Sunnyside High School Auditorium. Although the drama department is fortunate to have a spacious and technically updated auditorium, talented actors, and hard working crew members, the limitations of producing a play are an ever present challenge.

The first limitation will be the challenge of casting David and Lisa. Although many of the principal characters are teenaged, some are adults. "Playing age" as a young actor is extremely challenging. Sunnyside High School drama is also challenged with a disproportionate amount of men to women. Because we have so many females auditioning, we have terrific competition for roles. The male roles, which are so important in this story, demand strong actors- a challenge.

Our next limitation deals with the facilities. The high school auditorium has 750 seats and a 33' by 45' stage. David and Lisa, however, is a smaller, more intimate show. It will be a challenge to create this ambiance for the benefit of the audience. Also, since the auditorium is so large, it is in great demand. Community organizations are scheduling the facilities two years in advance. Although the high school fine arts department has priority over other groups, it is a wise practice to compromise on the scheduling for the good of the community. Even during the performance week, the front half of the stage will need to be cleared for these organizations. This poses some limits on scenery size and mobility.

The script itself poses an interesting problem. There are extremely short scenes that have blackouts for separation. The auditorium has an acceptable lighting system, but our main lighting student is graduating this year, so this lighting challenge will be in the hands of her apprentice, a novice. Due to outside organizations, we will not be able to set the lights and program the board until two weeks prior to opening night, another challenge for this young man.
Staffing and budget will probably not pose any limitations for the show. Even though all of our staff are high school students, they all have experience with their jobs (either in the position or as an assistant). Our budget will be around $4000, which is a workable amount for a non-musical. In all, our limitations with casting, facilities, and time will be challenging, but manageable.
Meredith (Maisy) Sylling
#537-96-3824
Sunnyside High School

Permission of Hiring Authority

Meredith (Maisy) Sylling may use her fall production at Sunnyside High School as part of her Master's Thesis Project.

Production: David and Lisa, by James Reach

Location: Sunnyside High School Auditorium

When: September- November 2001

Involved: Sunnyside High School students (actors and crew members)

__________________________  1/29/01
Bob Thomas, Current Principal  Date

__________________________  1/29/01
Dennis Birr, Incoming Principal  Date

Please note: signatures redacted due to security concerns.
Evaluation

Selecting a play for a thesis production is an arduous task. After thoughtful consideration, David and Lisa has been selected for the thesis show that will be produced at Sunnyside High School. David and Lisa is not a perfect show, there are many limitations and challenges. However, rather than selecting an “easier” show, this play was selected because of its appropriateness for the actors and the community. In fact, the play was also selected because of its limitations: a wonderful learning opportunity for the actors at Sunnyside High School. David and Lisa is a thought provoking play that will educate and inspire the actors and audience.

Before a play can inspire an audience, the limitations must be addressed and conquered. An audience, although unable to articulate it, will feel uncomfortable by an unpolished, unbalanced show. The first challenge that David and Lisa will undergo is casting. Before auditions, male students will be heavily recruited to provide a variety of options for casting the male roles. In addition, with the publisher’s permission, one role in particular may be changed to a female role. (This decision will be made after further character analysis study.) At auditions, the director will be assisted by two non-partial adult assistants to envision the best possible casting choices for this show. Every role is critical, however casting teenage actors to play adults is especially difficult. Costumes and make-up will help the audience’s suspension of disbelief, but wise casting decisions must be made at the start. There are many strong actors who will audition for this show, and despite the challenges, a strong cast will be assembled.

The facilities pose some limitations for David and Lisa. An intimate ambiance must be created for the audience and actors. By pushing the set forward and limiting seating to the front part of the auditorium, a tighter atmosphere will be created. Lighting certainly will assist with ambiance. In fact, it will help create the choppy, fragmented sensation that the playwright intends for the play. There are fifty-two short scenes in David and Lisa, and each one is separated by blackouts. Poorly executed, these blackouts will destroy momentum and character empathy. However, efficiently performed, these blackouts will reinforce the fragmented mental state
many of these characters experience. The playwright creates a choppy feeling to
enhance themes, not to detract from the pace and flow. With enormous amounts of
rehearsal, the novice lighting student will perfect this art. Even though the lighting
board cannot be programmed until two weeks prior to opening, the young man will
attend rehearsals and run lights as if the correct scenes were programmed.
Although the entire crew are high school students, they will work hard to overcome
the limitations and produce a high quality production of David and Lisa.

When the limitations of David and Lisa are assessed, the show stands out from
other scripts because of its appropriateness for our community. For the actors, over
half of the characters are teen-aged parts. Not only are they age appropriate, the
characters are well-developed, challenging roles. Also, twenty-two characters in a
show is a good size for the fall production. (Sunnyside High School produces a
musical in the winter with a larger cast.) Twenty-two actors is large enough to give
many students an opportunity for acting, but small enough to build a bonded team of
actors. David and Lisa will provide the learning opportunity for twenty two actors to
develop complex, dynamic characters who are different from their own experiences.

Sunnyside is a conservative, small town that does not see a lot of variety.
When students leave Sunnyside for the first time, they see types of people they had
not experienced in their home town. Theater provides the amazing gift of educating
and immersing an audience into a world they have never experienced: in this case, a
mental treatment facility. David and Lisa is not a controversial play that will stir up
arguments and protests, it is a play that will stir up conversation and hope. The
students and adults in Sunnyside will greatly benefit from this play.

In summary, David and Lisa is a great selection for Sunnyside High School.
First, it will be a challenge to successfully produce, but that success is not out of
reach. Next, the theme of the play is so important that the benefits of students and
community members experiencing this show will far out way the struggle and hard
work it will take to produce it. Finally, this is a show with themes that the director
feels passionately about. David and Lisa will have a successful run at Sunnyside High
School.
Director's Concept Statement

David and Lisa is a story about instability, love and healing. The audience has the unique opportunity to look into the minds of complex, dynamic characters for one year of the characters' lives. At the end of the production, the actors and the audience will understand the ability of the human soul to overcome and heal (Lemieux). It is the weighty job of the director to communicate this theme to the actors and the audience. Through character development, conflict analysis, and an emphasis on the resolution, the director will be an effective communicator to both the actors and the audience of David and Lisa.

David and Lisa, by James Reach, is based on the novel David and Lisa by therapist Theodore Isaac Rubin, M.D. The characters of David and Lisa (and autobiographically Dr. Swinford) are based on real patients Dr. Rubin counseled. Included in the doctor's novel are the notes he took while counseling these patients. Access to this amount of detail is both helpful and challenging for the director and actors. An honest portrayal of the characters must be adhered to, but an actor should not feel trapped by specific descriptions. To help the actors develop these characters, the director will guide them in combining research with their own interpretation of the character. The characters in this show have specific medical conditions that must be accurately portrayed, yet they also have unique minds and personalities that must be developed. An image that will help the actors empathize with the characters is a maze. Early on, the actors will attempt to complete a maze (that, without their knowledge, has no solution). This exercise will serve as a metaphor for the daily experiences of the characters in the play. The actors will also go through a corn maze as a bonding activity and to continue the development of the metaphor. Through careful research and guided character development, the actors will create complex, dynamic characters who are both technically accurate and innovatively new creations.

To communicate the complexity of the characters to the audience, the director will use imagery and draw focus to their dynamic nature. David, the lead character, has a morbid fascination with clocks. The symbol of a clock to represent the future,
fragments of life, and death will be used through scenery and props. Humans too often believe that people cannot change. David and Lisa proves the opposite. The major theme of the story is that humans can overcome adversity and change. David, Lisa and Dr. Swinford must show the audience their dynamic nature. They will communicate this physically, vocally, and emotionally. The characters are not “healed” at the end of the story, a drastic change would be incongruous to the intention of the playwright however, the audience must see the path of change these characters are embarking upon.

“Despite much progress in electronics, scientific theory, and medicine people continue to have people problems” (Rubin 7). This is the core of the conflict in David and Lisa. Quite often in drama, the conflict is subtle and hard to see, not so in David and Lisa. Some of these characters cannot bear human touch, have obsessive compulsive disorders, are schizophrenic, and extremely needing of love and attention. The conflicts when these characters interact are not hidden or subverted, they are blatant and verbal. The director will further develop the conflict with a fast paced show and fragmented scenes. This quick pace will attach one scene of conflict with the next. The result will be the immersion of the audience into the minds of David and Lisa, a speeding, disjointed ride of consciousness. Conflict is the key to this story. Without it, there would be no need for hope and help. With effective communication, the actors and the audience will be so greatly disturbed by the conflict that the resolution will feel like a powerful, reassuring answer.

The closing image of David and Lisa is of Lisa taking David’s hand, his anguish with the touch, and finally his relief at surviving it. This is the resolution the audience should feel as well. The powerful conflict should feel abrasive, but the sense of survival and of the path of healing should cause the audience to breath deeply and relax. The director will communicate this with a slower pace, longer scenes, and gentler lighting. The actors will have developed their characters to show the audience the process of healing and help convince them that humans can grow and change.
Francis Hodge argues that a director has four drives: a vision of the play, a comprehensive knowledge, skills in communication, and a very strong desire to entertain (2). *David and Lisa* will have an important impact on the students and the community if the director's vision and knowledge remains steadfast. Communicating the characters, conflict and resolution will immerse the actors and audience in a beautiful story with a powerful theme. It is the desire of this director to impact, entertain, and educate everyone involved in this production of *David and Lisa.*
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Lighting Designs Due

Begin research at C.W.U.

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- Calendars
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- Production Staff Meeting, Lunch
- Read through

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- Block Act I.1-4 (memorized)
- Block I.5-8
- Block I.9-12

- Logos Due
- Review I.1-4 (memorized)
- Review I.5-8 (memo.)
- Review I.5-8 (memo.)
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<td>Act I (memorized)</td>
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<td>Act II (memorized)</td>
<td>Scenery Due (basic unit)</td>
<td>Props Due</td>
<td>Mid Show Cast Party!</td>
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<td>Production Staff Meeting- Lunch</td>
<td>Photos for lobby Act I</td>
<td>Costumes Due Act I</td>
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<td>Production Staff Meeting- Lunch Run through</td>
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|        |        |         |           |          | 2  | Scenery  
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|        |        |         |           |          | Run through | Run through |
|        |        |         |           |          | 1  | Paint stage |
|        |        |         |           |          |    Final touch up |
| 4      | 5      | 6  | Production Staff  | 7  | Lobby Displays |
|        |        |    | Meeting- Lunch  |          | Due |
|        |        |    | Dress Rehearsal | 8  | School Show |
|        |        |    |                |          | Call 7:30 am |
|        |        |    |                |          | Curtain 9:00 am |
| 9      | 10     | 11 | Scenery 11-3   | 12 | Paint stage |
|        |        |    |                |          | Due |
|        |        |    |                | 13 | Call 5:00 |
|        |        |    |                |          | Curtain 7:00 |
|        |        |    |                | 14 | Call 5:00 |
|        |        |    |                |          | Curtain 7:00 |
| 17     | 18     | 19 | Performance  | 20 | Performance |
|        |        |    |                |          | Call 5:00 |
|        |        |    |                |          | Curtain 7:00 |
|        |        |    |                | 21 | Cast Party |
| 24     | 25     | 26 | Performance  | 27 |             |
|        |        |    |                |          |             |
|        |        |    |                | 28 |             |
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Given Circumstances

Geographical location

The author specifies that *David and Lisa* takes place “in a home in Connecticut, and in and around a school in Westchester” (6). Details in the play that refer to climate and location include the following:

- David takes a train to the treatment facility (7)
- Mother does not want to drive because of the traffic (7)
- Mother worries about David because “the weather gets bad up there” (8)
- David catches the Berkley train (9)
- it is raining (24)
- the kids go to Radio City for the evening (28)
- kids wear coats to go out (28)
- kids go ice-skating at a park then walk to the zoo (40)
- Father suggests that they drive up to Boston to see Harvard (60)
- kids go to Rockefeller Center (66)

Since the location is specified by the author and supported with details throughout the script, Sunnyside High School's production will adhere to this location. However, a specific accent for every character will not be attempted due to the complexity and inappropriateness. Beyond the challenge of teaching high school students the subtleties of a Westchester accent, the characters come from all over the United States. The actors will develop their characters without a specific Westchester accent, but every endeavor to accurately represent this location will be attempted.
Date

Through a careful examination of the script, the season, month and even time of day can be inferred. The one detail that is vague, however, is the year *David and Lisa* is set. The following are clues in the script that contributed to the decision to set this production in the year 1958.

- Mother uses the term “infirmary” (8)
- Mother uses the term “rubbers” for boots (8)
- Kate talks about Tony Curtis and Doris Day in “Featherbed Romance” (19)
- Carlos uses the following terms: shivs, pop guns, fuzz (police) (26)
- the kids go to Radio City for a “picture” (28)
- Mother wants to take David shopping for “summer suits” (58)

Using the clues above and research on the origin of *David and Lisa*, 1958 is appropriate because that is the year that Dr. Theodore Isaac Rubin actually counseled David and Lisa. The play could be produced by simply generalizing that the play takes place in the late 1950s or early 1960s. However, with this specific year in mind, the actors and production team will remember that this is based on a real time and real people. Inspiration and authenticity will be garnered from this knowledge.

The following is a chart of the date, month, and time of day as inferred in the script:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act 1</th>
<th>Act 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scene 1: about 1:00 September 1</td>
<td>Scene 1: night, first week of April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2: 1:30, same day</td>
<td>Scene 2: afternoon, one week later</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 3: later that day</td>
<td>Scene 3: morning, next day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 4: later that day</td>
<td>Scene 4: noon, last week of April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 5: 4:05, later that day</td>
<td>Scene 5: afternoon, next day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 6: that night</td>
<td>Scene 6: morning, first week of May</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 7: that night</td>
<td>Scene 7: morning, next day</td>
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<td>Scene 8: that night</td>
<td>Scene 8: morning, next day</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Scene 9: that night (bedtime)  
Scene 10: that night (bedtime)  
Scene 11: next morning  
Scene 12: same morning  
Scene 13: that night  
Scene 14: day time, one week later  
Scene 15: night time, two weeks later  
Scene 16: morning, two weeks later  
Scene 17: daytime, one month later  
Scene 18: afternoon, end of November  
Scene 19: afternoon, mid December  
Scene 20: night, late December  
Scene 21: afternoon, first week of January  
Scene 22: afternoon, second week of Jan.  
Scene 23: afternoon, last week of January  
Scene 24: afternoon, first week of Feb.  
Scene 25: morning, one day later  
Scene 26: noon, second week of February  
Scene 27: later that night  
Scene 28: same night

Although this information is not provided by the author, it is supported through clues and conversations in the script. Time of day and season will be helpful to both the actors and the costume crew in their work on this play.

Economic environment

The characters in David and Lisa fall into one of three economic groups: upper, upper middle, and lower class. The following list provides details from the play that support this division of characters.

- David's family can afford to send him to this facility (8).
- Mother wants David to go to an ivy-league school (8).
Porter calls David “sir” (9).

There is a housekeeper at the facility (11).

David was sent to a number of psychiatrists (14).

Alan has an inexpensive watch (15).

Most people think the food at the facility is very good (16).

Simon plays chess (18).

Sandra’s stepmother is a famous actress (18).

Kate wants “someone who appreciates the finer things in life” (19).

Josette has been to numerous psychiatrists (24).

Facility leaders take kids to Radio City and Rockefeller Center (28, 66).

Mother travels to Nassau (29).

David has owned expensive watches (39).

Carlos puts on airs and asks Mother to dance with a fake British accent (47).

Mother questions how Carlos can afford to go to this school because it is so expensive (49).

A welfare agency put Carlos in the facility (49).

Lisa has no family and has lived in orphanages and institutions her whole life (53).

Mother tries to appease David with shopping and going out to eat (57).

Mother is disdainful of Father’s non ivy-league school (58).

Father will take David to visit Harvard to cheer him up (60).

Simon listens to Bach (62).

David “detests amateur performances” (68).

Two boys in the street have guttural speech (76-77).

The text provides enough details to support the assumption that this facility is a very expensive one. All of the kids (except Carlos and Lisa) come from upper class families with a exposure to the finer things in life. The therapists and workers at the
facility appear to live well, but not excessively well. And finally, Lisa and Carlos are wards of the state and the boys at the end of the play are very poor. These three levels of economic groups need to be developed through speech, dress, and behavior.

Political environment

There are no specific connections between the characters and the political environment in David and Lisa. There is, in fact, a very secluded feeling to the environment of the story. Characters are isolated at the treatment facility and separated from the politics of the world surrounding them. However, no fully developed character is unshaped by the politics of their day, so it is important to know about the world of 1958. Here are some general facts that would pertain to the lives of the characters in this play:

- The 1950 Census shows that 150 million people lived in the United States ("Events" 1).
- 1951- The last U.S. atomic bomb test is performed in Nevada ("Events" 1).
- 1951- J.D. Salinger publishes the book The Catcher in the Rye ("Events" 1).
- 1952- The U.S. tests its first H-bomb in the Pacific ("Events" 1).
- 1952- The Immigration and Naturalization Act is signed ("Events" 1).
- 1952- Doctor Jones Salk develops a successful vaccine for polio ("Medical" 1).
- 1954- U.S. Senator McCarthy begins televised hearings investigating alleged Communists in the army ("Important" 2).
- 1954- The first atomic powered sub is created ("Inventions" 1).
- 1954- A U.S. study links smoking with cancer ("Medical" 1).
- 1954- Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas ("Important" 5)
- 1954-55 Rock ‘n’ Roll dominates the world of music with singers including: Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Elvis Presley ("Music" 1).
• 1955- Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on a public bus in Alabama
  ("Events" 2).
• 1955- The Warsaw Pact is formed ("Events" 1).
• 1955- James Dean dies in a car crash ("Events" 1).
• 1956- New phone lines across the Atlantic Ocean are formed ("Events" 1).
• 1956- The musical West Side Story is a hit ("Music" 1).
• 1957- Sputnik is launched ("Events" 1).
• 1958- The U.S. Explorer orbits Earth ("Events" 1).
• 1958- The integrated circuit is invented creating a microprocessor
  ("Inventions" 1).
• 1958- The hula hoop is the summer craze ("Inventions" 1).
• 1950s- Television programs include: The Howdy Doody Show, I Love Lucy, Captain Kangaroo, The Honeymooners, and Leave it to Beaver
  ("Events" 2).

Despite the lack of political conversations or situations in David and Lisa, the
characters are affected by the world surrounding them and actors should be aware of
this political environment.

Social environment

The characters in David and Lisa learn to accept the needs of one another to
survive the mental illness surrounding them. Adults cautiously work with the kids
trying to address their needs while respecting the wishes of the child. Only
occasionally are the gentle social institutions these characters live under are
violated. Since the goal of the adults is to help the kids, a social pattern of respect
toward the illness is followed.

The workers at the mental treatment facility display a professional
attitude toward both the kids and the parents. With a situation like David's, the workers remember to avoid contact with him (with one mistake by John (31)) and respect his need for solitude. Lisa's teacher, John, patiently pursues and helps her learn, despite her challenging illness. Alan is even respectful toward David's mother who overtly challenges him. Alan steps away and allows Mother to determine their relationship on her own terms (13). This professional attitude from the facility workers helps both the parents and the kids in the healing process.

Another interesting examination of the social interactions in David and Lisa is a view of the moments in which a character attempts to make a connection with another character. People are always trying to make connections with one another, but what is especially interesting in this play are the responses characters give to the initiator. The following is a chart of each moment in the play in which a character attempts to make a connection or a relationship with another character:

**Adult initiating relationship with Kid**

Mother pursues David, he rejects (8)
Mother pursues David, he rejects (11)
Mrs. Ferris pursues David, he rejects (11)
Alan pursues David, he rejects (15)
John pursues Lisa, she rejects (23)
John pursues Lisa, she accepts (24)
Ben pursues David, he rejects (28)
Alan pursues David, he rejects (28)
John pursues Lisa, she accepts (29)
Mother pursues David, he rejects (29)
John pursues David, he rejects (31)
Alan pursues David, he accepts (34) ****First real acceptance from David.
Alan pursues David, he rejects (43)
Mother pursues David, he rejects (48)
Alan pursues David, he accepts (53)
Alan pursues David, he rejects (55)
Father pursues David, he rejects (57)
Mother pursues David, he rejects (57)
Father pursues David, he rejects (59)
Alan pursues David, he accepts (68)
Alan pursues David, he accepts (71)
John pursues Lisa, she accepts (71)

Kid initiating relationship with Adult

David pursues Alan, he accepts (36)
David pursues Alan, he rejects (39)
Sandra pursues Maureen, she accepts (40)
David pursues Alan, he accepts (46)
Carlos pursues Mother, she rejects (47)
David pursues Mother, she rejects (49-51)
David pursues Alan, he accepts (61)
David pursues Alan, he accepts (63)
David pursues Alan, he accepts (65)

Adult initiating relationship with Adult

Mother pursues Alan, he rejects (13)
Alan pursues Barbara, she accepts (20)

Kid initiating relationship with Kid

Carlos pursues Sandra, she rejects (17)
Simon pursues David, he rejects (18)
Kate pursues David, he rejects (19)
Carlos pursues Lisa, she rejects (19)
Robert pursues David, he rejects (21)
Kate pursues David, he rejects (28)
David pursues Lisa, she accepts (33)**** First real initiation from David.
Lisa pursues David, he accepts (37)**** First real acceptance from David (with Lisa).
David pursues Lisa, she rejects (38)
Lisa pursues David, he accepts (41)
David pursues Simon, he accepts (44)
David pursues Lisa, she accepts (47)
Lisa pursues David, he accept (52)
David pursues Lisa, she accept (67)
Lisa pursues David, he reject (74)
Boys pursue Lisa, she reject (76)
David pursues Lisa, she accept (78)
Lisa pursues David, he accept (79)

This breakdown reveals some unusual patterns. Almost the entire first third of the story is about people attempting connections that are denied. Around page 33, David begins to start accepting and initiating his own connections. The rest of the play is not total acceptance, but it is remarkable how much acceptance David gives to Lisa and Alan. He will not accept his parents' initiations, but he is making progress with others. Also interesting is that this chart shows that the play is not about adults' relationships with one another. This is a play focused on the kids. While the kids make a few initiations with the adults, the bulk of the play is focused on the reactions kids have when adults or their peers pursue a relationship with them.

This play could have easily been titled David. However, the playwright wants this story to be about social relationships and the title reflects that desire. David learns to accept the connection of others whether emotional or physical and begins his process of healing.

**Religious environment**

It is not the inclusion of religion that is unusual in *David and Lisa* it is the omission of it from every character's life that is surprising. While many plays do not directly deal with religious issues, the lack of spirituality is unusual in this situation because of the issues these characters wrestle with: the purpose of life, death, and healing. Quite often healing programs address spirituality whether through an Eastern or Western religious thought, but none of the characters' healing touches on either of these traditional philosophies.
Neither of David's parents appear to deal with religion. Clearly Mother does not have a spiritual soul. She claims that David worships her and appears to be satisfied with that (12). Mother's selfish ambition does not fall under the teachings of any spiritual values. David's father does not rely on a higher power for guidance. He tells David he can heal himself saying, “... all it takes is will power” (59). Father is unnerved by David's sickness because David is such an intelligent boy as if intelligence were the cure (59). There is no mention of spirituality in Father's long apology speech (59) and the audience is left to assume that David has had no instruction in religion from his parents.

David's healing process with Dr. Alan Swinford also lacks any spiritual instruction. David is morbidly afraid of dying yet Alan does not provide thoughts or answers with religion (36). However, Alan does help David think through the issue to find his own solution. David eventually develops a philosophy. He explains, “I've been figuring that-- in a way-- we never die at all... if people have children, and children have children-- in a way, we go on living. Like the branches of a tree” (53).

David's philosophy becomes the religion of David and Lisa. Alan lives the idea of helping kids and David finds hope in the future. Although this does not support either Eastern or Western traditional religious thoughts, it is a philosophy that works for these characters.
Previous Action

- Mother and Father decide to send David to a Mental Treatment Facility
- David is told he is going to a Mental Treatment Facility (school)
- Mother has no other children
- David has “bad colds”
- Father graduates from a non ivy-league school
- David says good-bye to Father
- David and parents meet with Dr. Swinford
- Mrs. Ferris is busy with her job
- David has nightmares - Father tells Dr. Swinford about them
- David excels in Math at school (top of his class)
- David has trouble in English class - despite his advanced, articulate speaking/reading/writing
- David sketches clocks
- David spends two days doing extensive testing at the facility
- Carlos drops bricks on cops with his brother
- Robert goes a month before he showers
- Robert enrolls two years ago at the facility
- Carlos is the newest kid prior to David
- John stops rhyming with Lisa and she accepts it
- Kate returns from her last visit at home in bad shape
- Dr. Swinford’s relations with Mother are difficult
- Mother takes David to a number of psychiatrists
- John is the only person Lisa will communicate with
- David has reasons to be afraid of people
- David learns chess
- Welfare agency pays for Carlos to attend the facility
- Carlos knocks up thirteen girls
• Lisa arrives three years ago- parents dead, she lives most of life in orphanages and institutions
• Mother pursues Father at his college on weekend visits
• Father never took trips with his family- his father did not show caring toward him
• Father wants to make world over for David as a baby
• David has cars, trucks, stuffed animals (presents from Father) as a boy
• David admires Father
• David goes to a freak show at eight- saw a half-man half-woman, mother laughs at his fear and retells the story as a joke
• David’s mother goes to cooking school last year
Analysis of Dialogue

David and Lisa is written in a modern-day, simple, conversational style. James Reach attempts to create a realistic world with his wording. He uses dialogue that is quick and brief which makes his characters sound like typical humans. These are not poetic characters and the audience does not have to work at suspended disbelief, the realism of their language is easy and obvious. Through examination of Reach’s word choice, structure of phrases, and the sound of the dialogue, this realistic style will be evident.

James Reach devotes great detail in selecting words for his characters. Through dialogue, each character’s education, demeanor, and psychological state are presented. From Simon’s bourgeois dialogue to Lisa’s rhyming mania, words convey characterization. Alan “takes pains” not to use clinical words which creates a comfortable character and environment (34). Reach rarely relies on movement to develop characters and action, rather allows the dialogue to promote conflict. In fact, there are only two moments in David and Lisa when movement furthers the action: David’s reliance on his teddy bear (22) and his tearing apart Mother’s letter (29). All other action in this play is created through dialogue. Word choice is important not only for characterization and action but for control. Many characters use their words to control their lives. Lisa controls Muriel through rhyme and David controls Alan by not talking. Also, Mother manipulates others with her words creating guilt trips and martyrdom. Reach carefully selects words to convey character, develop action, and to reveal character motivation.

As a whole, the lines in David and Lisa are relatively short. Looking at the lines from an actor’s point of view, speeches will not be a stumbling point for memorization, it will be the numerous short lines that will be a challenge. There is a clipped sort of feeling with the dialogue, and the short scenes certainly contribute to that feeling. In almost every line, Reach inserts a “--” marking. This pause exaggerates this clipped feeling and also supports the realistic conversational tone of
the dialogue. There are only two speeches in the play. Father has an apology speech (59) and David has a speech when he is interacting with Lisa (38). Interestingly, Alan does not deliver any speeches, his role is that of a listener. Overall, the sentence and phrase structure of David and Lisa is clipped and brief.

The sound of this play could be compared to a typewriter. Aggressive characters are clipping away at one another in short, forceful sentences. With the exception of Lisa’s poetic musings, the dialogue is pounding and biting. Many of the characters are well educated and have articulate word choice. David, especially, sounds extremely intelligent in his dialogue. Alan and the other workers at the mental treatment facility are well educated but chose not to sound as refined in their speech. They are constantly reaching out to the kids with their words, and the kids very often rebuke these attempts with their clipped responses. David and Lisa sounds quick and forceful: a realistic patter.

Due to the word choice, the structure of the sentences, and the sound of the dialogue, David and Lisa is a clipped, brisk play. The goal for success in delivering these lines will be to keep the tempo up. Dragging and excessive pauses between lines could double the length of this play. To captivate the audience and maintain a sense of reality, the dialogue must be delivered at an up tempo speed, while still maintaining inner monologues and subtext. This certainly will be a challenge for the director and actors at Sunnyside High School.
Analysis of Dramatic Action

• units with titles
• verbs with lines
• reciprocal action sentences with scenes

David and Lisa

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

By James Reach

Adapted from the Book
by Theodore Isaac Rubin
and the Screenplay
by Eleanor Perry

SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.
25 West 45th Street
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CHARACTERS
11 males; 11 females
(In Order of Their Appearance)

DAVID CLEMENS
MRS. CLEMENS
PORTER + Mr. Clemens (same actor)
SECRETARY
DR. ALAN SWINFORD
MRS. FERRIS (and Secretary - combine roles)
MAUREEN HART (and Maureen - combine roles)
JOSETTE
CARLOS
SANDRA
SIMON
KATE
LISA
BARBARA
ROBERT + 1st Boy (same actor)
BEN + 2nd Boy (same actor)
JOHN
MR. CLEMENS-
GIRL
WOMAN
FIRST-BOY
SECOND-BOY

Note: Some of the parts may be doubled; and if desired, extra boys and girls may be used in the school scenes.
David and Lisa

ACT ONE

Scene: David's bedroom at home. Needed are a cot bed, a partially packed suitcase, open on the bed, and a pile of boy's clothes, also on the bed.

At Rise: David Clemens is discovered. He is a tall, thin boy of sixteen. He is immaculately dressed, as he always is, in a dark suit, white shirt, dark tie. His blonde hair is faultlessly parted and combed, his black shoes faultlessly shined. His features are straight and fine, but his face has a taut, pinched quality. When he speaks, his voice is low and well modulated, but often with a tone of sarcasm or bitterness. His pronunciation is excellent—each word enunciated with clarity. There is a certain stiffness about his posture; he holds his back very straight and walks with noticeable rigidity. He is packing the suitcase, slowly, methodically, folding and storing each item with great care. After a few moments, his mother's voice is heard calling from Offstage.

Mother: (Offstage.) David! (David does not react at all, and after another moment, she enters. She is an attractive, slender woman of forty with good features, greying hair. She is well dressed in a tweed suit and a chic felt hat. Her voice is softly reproachful.) I told you we had to leave at one-thirty sharp, David. We'll miss the train.

David: We can drive in—

Mother: I couldn't cope with the traffic—not today; I'm too upset.

David: (Coldly.) Why are you upset? (As he continues to hurry to derail to self-persecute to sting)

Scene #1

Reciprocal Action: Mother dominates David, David stings Mother.

Metaphor: This scene is like a bee inside a cup.

Senses:

- sight  shadowy
- smell  rotten
- taste  tart
- touch  rough
- sound  piercing